

Resolution of the Mississippi University for Women Faculty Senate defending academic freedom to instruct in the classroom concerning matters of race, gender, and critical race theory.

Adopted by the Faculty Senate February 24, 2022

RATIONALE:

WHEREAS state legislative proposals are being introduced in Mississippi that threaten academic freedom and target academic discussions of race, gender, critical race theory and related issues in American history throughout Mississippi's K-12 schools, colleges and universities.

WHEREAS the Mississippi University for Women Faculty Handbook endorses the AAUP and AACU [Statement on Principles of Academic Freedom](#) which entitles teachers to academic freedom in regards to research, publication, and instruction of their subject within the classroom.

WHEREAS Mississippi University for Women's [mission statement](#) and institutional values affirm its commitment to provide educational opportunities in a "diverse and inclusive environment" and that this diversity "allows students to grow in their understanding of self and others."

WHEREAS Infringements on academic freedom and restrictions on academic discussion in the classrooms at Mississippi University for Women threaten this university's ability to provide a "diverse and inclusive environment" as stated in the mission statement of Mississippi University for Women.

WHEREAS learning about minority and marginalized populations and cultures and about the policies in this country which have contributed to inequities among groups facilitates the [mission](#) of Mississippi University for Women by encouraging and enabling students to "grow in their understanding of self and others."

WHEREAS attempts by the state legislature to mandate or restrict a university's curriculum infringe on [section 213-A of the Mississippi Constitution](#), which places the "the management and control" of Mississippi's institutions of higher learning under "a board of trustees to be known as the Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning".

WHEREAS the Mississippi Board of Trustees of State Institutes of Higher Learning [policies and bylaws](#) emphasize in its mission statement a commitment to a teaching environment that

“serves a diverse and well-prepared student body” (102.3) as well as a “commitment to ethnic and gender diversity”(102.3) as well as stating that “Embracing diversity of thought, cultural background, experience, and identity helps to foster inclusive and intellectually enriched campus communities that maximize opportunities for success among all students and employees” (102.6).

WHEREAS The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) requires in [accreditation standard 6.4](#) that each institution of higher education under its purview “implements policies and procedures for preserving and protecting academic freedom” (p.18).

WHEREAS preserving academic freedom in all classrooms and the resulting freedom to educate students about systemic barriers to realizing a multiracial democracy, barriers based on race and/or gender, should be understood as central to the active and engaged pursuit of knowledge in the 21st century to produce engaged and informed citizens;

WHEREAS over seventy organizations, including the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) and the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU), issued the [Joint Statement on Legislative Efforts to Restrict Education about Racism and American History](#) (June 16, 2021) stating their “firm opposition to a spate of legislative proposals being introduced across the country that target academic lessons, presentations, and discussions of racism and related issues in American history in schools, colleges and universities . . . In higher education, under principles of academic freedom that have been widely endorsed, professors are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject. Educators, not politicians, should make decisions about teaching and learning.”

RESOLUTION:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Mississippi University for Women Faculty Senate solidly rejects any attempts by bodies external to the faculty to restrict or dictate any university curriculum on any matter, including matters related to race, gender, and social justice, and will stand firm against encroachment on faculty authority in the classroom by the legislature that violates our academic freedom, the Mississippi University for Women mission statement, our values, and institutional goals, policies and bylaws of the Board of Trustees of State Institutes of Higher Learning, SACSCOC accreditation standards, and the Mississippi Constitution.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Mississippi University for Women Faculty Senate stands with our K-12 colleagues whose classrooms and students are also threatened by this pernicious legislation when they seek to teach the truth in U.S. history and civics education.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Mississippi University for Women Faculty Senate calls upon our administration to affirm that they reject any attempts by bodies external to the faculty to restrict or dictate university curriculum on any matter, including matters related to racial and

social justice, and will stand firm against encroachment on faculty authority by the legislature or possibly the Boards of Trustees.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Mississippi University for Women Faculty Senate affirms the [Joint Statement on Efforts to Restrict Education about Racism](#), authored by the AAUP, PEN America, the American Historical Association, and the Association of American Colleges & Universities, endorsed by over seventy organizations, and issued on June 16, 2021.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Mississippi University for Women Faculty Senate calls on other representative bodies at the university, such as the Staff council and the Student Government Association, to support this Resolution.